

[Life During Confederate Days]

LIFE DURING CONFEDERATE DAYS

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198 Elbert Street

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Housekeeper

I.B. Hawkes LIFE DURING CONFEDERATE DAYS

Mrs. Green's house completely fitted the description given me by a delivery boy about 15 years of age. Located on a hill with a front yard practically covered in green grass with the exception of the front walk, shrubbery here and there and a few blooming flowers about the yard, trees whose leaves are beginning to show various colors, presented quite a pretty picture with a two story frame house painted white with green trimmings in the back ground, seemed a typical place to find just such a lovely old lady as I found occupying this home.

In answer to my knock a lady appeared in a printed frock, rather spick and span with quite a puzzled look on her face. She probably took me for a book agent since I carry my writing material etc. and book agents are not given a very cordial welcome by most people. "Good morning," she said, "won't you come in?" Introducing myself I asked, "is there an older Mrs. Green who lives here than you?" "Yes, come in." I accepted her invitation quite readily and on entering the living room there was an old lady with white hair, rocking to and fro with glasses on and knitting something that seemed very interesting to her.

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The heater was of medium height, well polished and displayed cleanliness itself. On this heater a kettle of water was boiling furiously. Over the mantle was a picture of very old style with wide frame. In the corner an old spinning wheel, a settee covered with worn silk tapestry and little silk balls dangling from it in another corner. The chairs of antique style were showing their wear and a large artsquare with a few rugs covered most of the floor. "Howdy," said the elder Mrs. Green, before I could tell her my name. The young Mrs. Green following behind said, "Ma, this is Mrs. Spence, she wants to see and talk to you

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a while.” “Yes, yes, I am just knitting some lace for some pillow cases, I am allus busy at something.”

“Don't you want to tell me something about your life history, Mrs. Green?” I asked. At first she didn't know what to say, but then she said, I can generally tell whether I like any one or not time I see them, and I believe I will like you fine.

“Well, Honey, my troubles and my joys might not be very interesting to you, but they have proven to be both interesting and sad to me. I shall be glad to tell you something of my life history if you care to hear it, do you?”

“Of course I do, Mrs. Green.”

“Well, I was born 87 years ago, June 22, 1852. My father was shot in the arm while in action during the first 3 year of the Confederate War. He was sent home later because of illness and finally died with typhoid fever. He left ma with six chilluns, three boys and three girls. I was the oldest and I had to help ma raise the chilluns, but we worked hard, everybody had to work hard then. I have seen people cry and beg for something to eat. But I took those chillun and sent them to school, and I made them help me when they got home. We did all kinds of field work. Mother and me had to make all our clothes, spin the cotton and weave the cloth. Child, we have had to sit at night, spin cotton and weave by a light'ood knot for light a many a time. Our salt we got from the smoke house. We have had folks to come to our smoke house a many a time and get the dirt and boil it for salt. And we didn't have no sugar either. Ma never let the syrup barrel get empty, unless, she was cleaning it out to fill it again with fresh syrup. We sweetened pies, cakes and coffee and liked it as good as we like sugar today. Yes, sometimes now I make some old fashion sweet bread, ginger bread and I like it to this day for coffee. We parched wheat or rye. We didn't make enough wheat to have biscuits every day, we just baked biscuits twice a week. My mother would never let us cook on Sundays, we had to cook enough Saturdays to last till Monday.

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"We was raised to go to church. I allus saw that my brothers and sisters had good enough clothes to go. You see my oldest brother was a preacher and a fine Baptist preacher 4 he was.

"My mother's father was a preacher, she had three brothers and one son that was preachers. I ain't bragging but my people on both sides were good.

"Well, I began to think that I was grown about this time, and I married Mr. Green, a fine young man, too. His father was the richest man in Franklin County. His land was five miles long and he owned two big stores. About the time we married, this land was in Franklin County. It was decided that Franklin County was too large, so it was divided, and the house that my husband was raised in is now the courthouse in Stephens.

"I married in 1869, one night by candle light. Times was a little better now, we could afford candles. Carnesville was the nearest town to the Green place. There was a lot of talk about the Greens them days. Don't get me wrong, hear! I mean when they put the courthouse at the Green's place. My mother was with us, and she wanted to go back to Tennessee. Mr. Green said he came through Tennessee on his way back from war, and he thought it was a beautiful country. I could not let Ma leave me, and we went back with her and stayed four years. I had two chilluns while I was out there. Mr. Green was in the war too, and he would sit and tell me lots of things that happened.

He said, 'one time him and one more of the men hid behind what they called the breastworks, he says it is 5 something built of sticks and brush, just anything to keep the Yankees from seeing and killing them. One night it was raining and the trenches was full of mud, him and this man got sticks and rails and put one end up on the fence, the other was down in the mud, but they rolled up in their blankets and stayed till day light on these sticks, so they could see. Then they crawled out and saw a mother cat with three little kittens behind the breastworks. Well, he said, they had not had a bit to eat in three days,

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and they was so hungry that they got the little kittens, but they noticed that a mule had been shot and they cut a plug out of him and cooked it and ate it.'

'Oh, he said, he had to do so many things like that,' but he got back all right and we married.

"Well, Honey, I kept on till I had fourteen chilluns, eleven boys and three girls. We went back to Franklin County and Mr. Green's father died. So all his land and stores had to be divided up in eight parts. I took Mr. Green's mother to live with us. We was not so well off and I had to work. Our wheat was not so plentiful either, but his mother had to have her biscuits three times a day. She had always been rich, you see, and she had to have anything she wanted. You see, when Mr. Green's father died, his mother just got a child's part, but I didn't mistreat her. Mr. Green thought sometimes that she was overbearing, but she was getting old, and we both looked over it the best we could. She lived with 6 us and was 97 years old when she died. My husband was her baby, too.

"Well, Honey, as I told you we had fourteen healthy chilluns, and we were proud of every one of them. Some of them married before Mr. Green died, in good families, too. Well, after Mr. Green's death, I lived with my oldest son till he died. He was taken sick with pneumonia fever. Then I moved to Athens and have been here fifteen years. I got settled here and still sew, and do most anything that I could do, to help out as a boarder. I get \$30.00 a month from Mr. Green's death.

"I had a daughter to die last year with appendix, but her husband has plenty, so he and the chilluns are very comfortable. My son had a bad wreck not long ago in his car and broke his neck. All this has caused me a lot of sorrow, but now I take my pension, and rent this house, because all we had has gotten out of our hands with all these hard times. My daughter, her husband and son, and his wife, and grandson and his wife stay here with me. I could not live if they didn't stay with me. You see they are here to take care of me, if I get sick, and look after everything. We have a cow, hog and chickens. My baby boy lives

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just a little ways up the road. He comes every Saturday night or Sunday morning to hug my neck, and my grandchildren are so much company to me. There are five generations.

"I have forty grandchildren and fifty great grandchildren.

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I am always getting some kind of little present because there is Mother's Day or Christmas and my Birthday's too. Last birthday I had 116 here, that's why I like roomy houses. We have right big rooms and two big porches to sit on."

Her daughter said, "here Ma, here's your check". Mrs. Green's face brightened. The young Mrs. Green says, "Ma's always glad when her check comes, she wants to go to town right then and get it cashed."

"Do you go about much [,?] Mrs. Green?" I asked.

"Why yes, I don't give up for little things such as a touch of rheumatism."

The noon train went by so I decided I had better get to lunch. Mrs. Green got up to go to the door with me and she said, "I am sorry we didn't know you was coming out, we would have had our house a little more in order." " That's all right, everything look's very nice. " It was just fairly furnished but clean.